

The Computer Monitor

Spring 2007

Get Involved in EX.I.T.E. Camp 2007!

By: Meghan Kunz, Assistive Technology Specialist

The EX.I.T.E. (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Camp encourages middle school girls with disabilities to become more involved in science, technology, engineering, and math and to have fun while doing it. PACER Center will provide the fifth annual EX.I.T.E. summer session of exciting learning experiences.

Girls with disabilities entering sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are invited to take part in this free opportunity to learn through hands-on activities, motivational speakers, mentorship, and a visit to IBM in Rochester. Accommodations and special camper needs are considered and implemented into the curriculum to accommodate all campers and ensure a positive learning experience.

Last year, more than 50 IBM EX.I.T.E. Camps were conducted around the world and PACER was one of two designed specifically for girls with disabilities. A parent of one camper had this to say about EX.I.T.E. Camp 2006. "My daughter has never thought of science and math as fun and would NEVER have chosen to go to a science camp. But she wants to go to EX.I.T.E. Camp again! Thank you!"

Apply Now for EX.I.T.E. Camp 2007!

The 2007 EX.I.T.E. Camp for middle school girls will begin with an opening ceremony on the evening of July 26. The camp will be all day on July 30, Aug. 1, 3, 7, and 9. Applications will be accepted until May 1. For more information about the camp please call PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 or visit online at www.pacer.org/stc/exite.htm.



EX.I.T.E. campers from 2006 (pictured left to right: Katherine Daniel, Amber Bien, and Kate Malarkey) work with chemists from the 3M Corporation to make ice cream.

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PACER CENTER

www.pacer.org/stc

2007 STC Workshop Schedule

Parents and professionals will find helpful information at these important workshops. All are presented at PACER Center unless otherwise noted. Advance registration is required. To register, please go online to www.pacer.org/workshops, or call 952-838-9000.

Internet Use for Education and Daily Life

Saturday, March 24, 9 a.m. to Noon

PACER Computer Lab

The Internet, used responsibly, offers an alternative for children and youth to be involved with others their own age. It can open a world of possibilities for exploration for children and youth who may not have many other opportunities to experience the world. This workshop will teach parents of children and youth with disabilities, as well as children, the responsible and creative uses of the Internet. Participants will learn how to use a search engine; how to avoid unwholesome sites; how to create a web page; how to successfully create and use a blog; and suggestions for educational websites.

Kurzweil Hands-On!

Saturday, April 7, 9 a.m. to Noon

PACER Computer Lab

Kurzweil 3000 is a reading, writing and learning solution for individuals who have learning disabilities and are in middle school and beyond. This product encourages the ability to read the Web and features one-button Optical Character Recognition (OCR) scanning, highlighted text-to-speech, word prediction, keyboard accessibility, and outline creation. During this beginner's workshop, participants will receive hands-on training of the software and a free demo CD to take home. Previous experience is not required. Space is limited and registration is required.

“Universally Designed Technology in Schools” Online Training

With the support of the NEC Foundation, PACER has created a **free online training** to help teachers, administrators and other professionals learn about and implement universally designed technology (UDT) in K-12 schools. UDT enhances access to the general curriculum and supports inclusion of students with disabilities. The course can be accessed at www.pacer.org/stc/nec and topics include:

- Accessible Web-based learning
- Captioned and audio-described educational multimedia
- Accessible digital instructional materials
- Implementing UDT in K-12 Schools
- Free options to improve accessibility of school technology

Technology for Girls: Women in Technology

Tuesday, April 10, 6 to 8 p.m.

PACER Computer Lab

Targeted to middle school girls with disabilities, this free workshop is led by EX.I.T.E. (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) high school interns and women employed in technical fields at IBM. Hands-on group activities illustrate the importance of math, science, and creative problem solving for women. The girls will be introduced to famous women in science, math and technology and will create a presentation.

Understanding Universal Design for Learning

Thursday, May 10, 1 to 3:30 p.m.

PACER Conference Room

The central idea of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is that a curriculum should include alternatives to make it accessible and appropriate for individuals with different backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. This free workshop will explore what UDL is and how to implement UDL in the classroom. Participants will also see demonstrations of technology that supports the UDL concept.

What Parents and Professionals Need to Know About Technology for Children with Disabilities

Duluth Presentation: Thursday, June 21, 6 to 9 p.m.

Owatonna Presentation: Thursday, July 26, 6 to 9 p.m.

Professionals and parents of children with disabilities will be introduced to Assistive Technology and the legal consideration requirements under IDEA. Tips will be given about selecting appropriate assistive technology devices and be introduced to the Minnesota Assistive Technology Manual. Presenters will provide state and local resources for trying and acquiring assistive technology. This will be a great opportunity to receive information about grant and loan programs.

Simon Technology Center Workshop Series

This series is free and available to parents of children with disabilities and the professionals who work with them.

Brainerd Workshop Series

Technology to Access the General Curriculum: Universal Design for Learning

Tuesday, April 3, 6 to 9 p.m.

Participants will be introduced to the key terminology and history of universal design for learning (UDL) as well as have the opportunity to learn about the technology available to support UDL. Implementation strategies will be given, including the parent's role in supporting UDL and classroom planning tips.

Assistive Technology for Reading, Writing, and Math

Tuesday, May 15, 6 to 9 p.m.

Participants will receive an overview of assistive technology supports for reading, writing, and math curriculums. Demonstrations and hands-on time will be made available for technology that supports these areas. Presenters will provide resources, such as useful internet resources and technology vendor catalogs.

Creation Station at PACER Center

This series is **free** and available to children with and without disabilities.

Magic Nuudle Mania | Saturday, March 24, 10 a.m. to noon

Students of all ages and abilities will create one of a kind, 3-D masterpieces using cornstarch nuudles! Ships, hats, Frisbees, and more will come to life as you use your imagination to create and have nuudles of fun.

Puppet Storybooks | Saturday, April 28, 10 a.m. to noon

Join us to craft and design colorful felt puppets using yarn, felt, and much more! Once the puppets are completed, children of all ages and abilities will compose storybooks about the puppets to take home to share with friends and family.

A Touch of Spring | Saturday, May 19, 10 a.m. to noon

Come see what is blooming in the Creation Station. Children of all ages and abilities will use colorful tissue paper to decoupage terra cotta pots. Afterwards, we will add a special touch of spring by making vibrant flowers out of tissue paper.

Let's Go Fly A Kite | Saturday, June 30, 10 a.m. to noon

The sun is finally shining and we want children of all ages and abilities to be prepared. Join us to add a decorative touch to a kite that you can enjoy this summer. We will also beautify foam sun visors to shield the sun away when flying.

Mankato Workshop Series

How to Find and Fund Assistive Technology in Minnesota

Friday, April 20, 2 to 5 p.m.

Workshop participants are invited to hear about state and local resources for trying and acquiring assistive technology. This will be a great opportunity to network with local partners in assistive technology and receive information about grant and loan programs.

Technology to Access the General Curriculum: Universal Design for Learning

Friday, June 1, 2 to 5 p.m.

Participants will be introduced to the key terminology and history of universal design for learning (UDL) as well as have the opportunity to learn about the technology available to support UDL. Implementation strategies will be given, including the parent's role in supporting UDL and classroom planning tips.

Assistive Technology for Reading, Writing, and Math

Friday, July 13, 2 to 5 p.m.

Participants will receive an overview of assistive technology supports for reading, writing, and math curriculums. Demonstrations and hands-on time will be made available for technology that supports these areas. Presenters will provide resources, such as useful internet resources and technology vendor catalogs.

AT and Young Children: A Guide for Development

By: Tenley Pettyjohn and Carolyn Fors, Assistive Technology Specialists

Technology can have a major impact in promoting the development of literacy skills in young children. Typically, the development of literacy skills follows a predictable pattern of progress. Below is a guideline to use during your child's growth process in literacy development. Individual children may target these stages at various ages.

Stage 1

Universally Designed Toys

In this first stage, universally designed toys help young children develop fine and gross motor skills, as well as stimulate their visual and auditory needs. Universally designed toys are designed with features that are engaging, flexible in how they can be used and adjustable to meet individual needs.

Stage 2

Cause-and-Effect Software

Cause-and-effect is carried out by the child with the understanding that he or she is creating the response to an action. This may be by either pushing a switch or touching the computer screen to watch something else happen or appear on the screen. A touch screen allows the child to touch the screen to interact with the software program. Similarly, a switch can be pressed to act like a mouse click. Software that could be used for learning cause-and-effect skills include: *Happy Duck* by Inclusive Technologies, *babyWOW!* by Bowwow House, and the *SwitchIt!* series by Inclusive Technologies.

Stage 3

Early Skill Development Software

Once the child has a good understanding of cause-and-effect, software that promotes early learning skills should be explored. This includes software focusing on colors, numbers, and letters. While some of the programs can be accessed through a switch or touch screen, this is the time to experiment with alternative mice. This could include a regular mouse, a tiny mouse, or a trackball. Some options for early learning software include: *The Edmark House Series®* by Riverdeep Inc., *Jumpstart Toddler™* by Knowledge Adventure, and *Old MacDonald's Farm Deluxe™* by SoftTouch.

Stage 4

Literacy Software

At this stage, the child should be comfortable using the computer and able to use the computer with minimal help from an adult. Books on the computer can be a motivating way for children to increase their reading skills and confidence in reading aloud. Independent reading can be supported through a variety of early literacy software including: the *Living Books Library®* by Riverdeep, Inc., *BuildAbility®* by Don Johnston, Inc., and *Start-To-Finish® Literacy Starters* by Don Johnston, Inc.

The Simon Technology Center Library provides an opportunity to explore a variety of assistive technology programs for a minimal membership fee. For more information about the STC Library or any of the software programs listed above, please contact the STC or visit www.pacer.org/stc.



Guidelines for Selecting Appropriate Software

The first requirement in selecting software is to be sure that the software is educationally sound. Each concept should be presented accurately with appropriate graphics and sound. The software should be open-ended and active involvement should be encouraged. Problem solving opportunities should be presented and the software must be age, ability, and socially appropriate.

When selecting software for your child, make sure the program is easy to navigate with instructions that are clear and easy to follow.

Feedback from the program should be positive and nonthreatening. Software must also be engaging, fun, and motivating, as well as allow for the child to be successful.

Software selection should generally be based on the unique and individual needs of the child. Because of the large amount of software programs on the market today, it can be an overwhelming and costly process. Reading software reviews, visiting computer stores, and experimenting with potential pieces of software are all valuable experiences.

Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling Assistive Technology

By: Katrina Weibel, Assistive Technology Specialist

Are you looking for a place to sell assistive technology you no longer need? Or are you looking for a place to buy used assistive technology?

The Simon Technology Center offers **free** online classifieds for used assistive technology called Still Useful Product and Equipment Referral (SUPER). SUPER's goal is to connect buyers and sellers with used assistive technology in a variety of categories.

Buyers and sellers are able to post and view items within 15 categories, including:

- Ambulation/Walking
- Architectural Adaptation
- Augmentative Communication
- Computer Hardware/Software
- Daily Living Aids
- Environmental Controls
- Ergonomics
- Health/Therapy
- Prosthetics/Orthotics

"It was wonderful to use the PACER online ads to give away my daughter's hospital bed. VERY much appreciated on both ends. We love PACER! Thank you for all your work!

-Family that used SUPER service

- Ramps/Lifts
- Recreation/Leisure
- Seating/Positioning
- Transportation
- Vision]/Hearing Technology
- Wheel Chairs/Scooters

If you would like to view the SUPER listing or post an item online please visit www.pacer.org/stc/super or call 952-838-9000. Buyers and sellers contact one another directly to purchase and arrange a pickup time.

Choosing the Effective Program for Your Student's

By: Kristi Hansen, Simon Technology Center Coordinator

A generation ago, who would have thought to use a computer to teach reading and writing? Now, parents and professionals count on assistive technology to help develop literacy for students with certain disabilities.

Despite many amazing features of literacy software programs, families and professionals still need to be selective in choosing an appropriate program for a specific student.

High-tech reading and writing tools are often more difficult to choose because of the technical expertise required to understand the program. "Scan-and-read" is the general term used for programs that incorporate a variety of literacy tools. Usually these programs offer the ability to scan a paper document onto the computer, making it an electronic file. Scan-and-read programs will then read the electronic file aloud and provide supports such as a talking dictionary, homophone support, word prediction, and study tools.

Many times, when students need support for reading and writing, the most expensive program is deemed

"the best." However this may not be the case. Below is an outline of features to consider when evaluating scan-and-read programs for reading and writing needs:

Technical Capabilities:

1. Is the program cross-platform (available in Mac or Windows)? What are the computer requirements?
2. What type of technical assistance or training is available to learn the program?
3. What options are available so that a user can have access to the program at home and at school?
4. Is the interface suitable for the student? Is it user-friendly?
5. Can the toolbars be customized to show only the tools the student will be using?
6. What Optical Character Recognition (OCR) program does it use? Can the scanned document be edited?

Reading Capabilities:

1. What visual accommodations, such as text size, line spacing, and background colors can be customized?
2. What voice accommodations, such as pitch, tone, speed, volume can be made?
3. Are other voices available? Does the program support other languages?
4. Does the student have specific text-to-speech needs, such as having each letter, word, or sentence read aloud?
5. Does the user need a built-in dictionary that pronounces the word, and reads the definition? Does it need to be a phonetic dictionary?



Reading and Writing Needs

Writing Capabilities:

1. Does the user require a phonetic spell checker?
2. Are homophones (such as knight and night) supported during the writing process?
3. Is a word-prediction tool built in? What kinds of prediction customizations are available?
4. Does the program offer speech-to-text?

Studying Capabilities:

1. Can the user leave voice notes or text notes in a document that is being read?
2. Are highlighting tools or bookmarks available? Can they be extracted to create study aids?
3. Is there a research tool built in to assist in searching the Internet, gathering resources, and producing a bibliography?

Other Capabilities to Consider:

1. Is there a calculator that can be read aloud?
2. Does the program support file conversion to other formats such as MP3 or WAV files?
3. Does the program provide accessibility with a screen reader, or does it offer keyboard shortcuts?
4. Can multiple users log in and save their settings?
5. Are there parent or teacher controls for testing purposes?
6. Is the program portable by the use of a USB drive?

Resources such as comparative grids, product trial demonstrations, and hands-on evaluations, will help determine if a program is right for you. The PACER Simon Technology Center has compared four scan-and-read software programs to help students, families, and professionals choose the program that best suits their reading and writing needs. A grid compiling this information is available at www.pacer.org/stc under Handouts.

SETT Process Questions

Finding the appropriate assistive technology options can be a lengthy, stressful process. It starts with assessing the needs of the student, researching technology options, and finally comparing program features.

The key to successful selection is to follow the Student, Environment, Tasks, Tools (SETT) framework, as created by Joy Zabala, Ed.D, ATP, an assistive technology and leadership consultant. This framework was developed to aid in gathering and organizing data that can be used to make appropriate assistive technology decisions. Following this process can help determine technology options best suited for the student.

Once the needs are determined, technology options should be researched to find which product best matches the student's needs, abilities, environments, and tasks. Quite often families and professionals mistakenly use a program because they heard it was the best or they know of another student who had success with it. It is always important to evaluate a program on the features required for the intended user.

Student - What does the student need to do? What are the student's special needs? What are the student's current abilities?

Environment - What materials and equipment are currently available in the environment? What is the physical arrangement? What is the instructional arrangement? What supports are available to the student? What resources are available to the people supporting the student?

Tasks - What activities take place in the environment? What activities support the student's curriculum? How might the activities be modified to accommodate the student's special needs? How might technology support the student's active participation in those activities?

Tools - What no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech options should be considered when developing a system for the student? What strategies might be used to invite increased student performance? How might these tools be tried out with the student in the customary environments in which they will be used?

2007 PACER Annual Benefit



Jennifer Hudson: A Dreamgirl Come True

Singing sensation of the hit movie "Dreamgirls"

Dynamic vocalist, acclaimed actress, electrifying performer – Jennifer Hudson has garnered the world's attention.

Variety magazine says Hudson's performance "calls to mind debuts like Barbra Streisand in 'Funny Girl' or Bette Midler in 'The Rose,' with a voice like the young Aretha."

Hudson is a:

Golden Globe winner

Screen Actors Guild Award winner

Academy Award winner

American Idol favorite

2007 Benefit Ticket Prices

\$55 | \$85 | \$140* | \$200* | \$275* | \$550*

*Tickets include Patron Party after the performance

Saturday, May 5, 2007
Minneapolis Convention Center

Call 952-838-9000 or go to www.PACER.org for tickets or for more information on becoming a corporate sponsor.

The Computer Monitor

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